



TOM O'HALLERAN
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

August 16, 2022

The Honorable Tom J. Vilsack
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to introduce the proposal submitted by the University of Arizona, in partnership with Bridgestone Americas, Inc., and a group of regional and Tribal farmers, for funding through the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant program. Their proposal would utilize funds to support the development of guayule production in the United States (U.S.), addressing our dependency on foreign sources of natural rubber, such as *Hevea brasiliensis*, and offering a sustainable crop for U.S. farmers in arid regions, such as Arizona.

Guayule, a rubber-producing shrub, offers the opportunity to create a new domestic industry that mitigates the current risks associated with *Hevea brasiliensis*. This crop requires two years to reach an economic rubber yield and is regenerative by harvesting only the above-ground portion of the plant. At least three growing cycles are possible, enabling a no-till practice over the six-to-ten-year plant life cycle reducing water-use and enhancing soil carbon sequestration.

Over the past five years, a small group of farmers, in collaboration with the University of Arizona, Bridgestone Americas, Inc., USDA, and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture invested in an Agriculture and Food Research Initiative pilot project to test the viability of guayule. The results are very encouraging, showing that the crop is particularly adept for cultivation in desert climates with limited water supply. This means that our farmers – particularly in the southwest – have a viable crop they can grow sustainably, while also providing a critical good for our domestic industrial supply chain and national security.

As Arizona and surrounding states contend with a historic 1,200-year drought, our farmers need alternative crops that are well-suited for our climate. The Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities grant will help growers implement climate smart practices as guayule takes root in the region. Thank you for the consideration of this request in accordance with all applicable rules, regulations, laws, and guidelines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran".

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress